CIDAC 0
Centro de Docun TL 2395
1986

Summary Report

NGO Submissions on East Timor to United Nations Special Committee on Decolonisation, New York, 1986

Twenty one petitioners representing various non-government organisations from Asia, Europe, Australia, and North America, as well as individual experts in the fields of international law, human rights, and anthropology, addressed the Special Committee on Decolonisation on 15 August, 1986 at its 1310th meeting held at the New York headquarters of the United Nations. Other petitioners presented written papers.

These speakers addressed seven main points.

1. International law

The speakers emphasized the right of the people of East Timor to self-determination and independence, in accordance with the UN Charter and Res. 1514 (XV) and 1541 (XV). Indonesia's continuing occupation of East Timor, and its refusal to comply with Security Council Res.384 (1975) and 389 (1976) were condemned.

2. Support for the SG's mandate

Petitioners expressed strong support for the SG's efforts in discharging his mandate within the framework of GA Res. 37/30. Petitioners urged the inclusion of genuine representatives of the East Timorese people in the process of negotiations. Some speakers recalled past UN involvement in the process of decolonization of some territories. The responsibility of certain major industrial countries was stressed in view of their influence with Indonesia.

3. Indonesian general elections

It was strongly argued that any suggestion that the UN should observe the 1987 general elections in Indonesia as a means of determining the wishes of the East Timorese people regarding integration, must be rejected. Only a UN-supervised process of self-determination, according to UN procedures, separate from elections in Indonesia, could be accepted as fair.

4. Conditions in the territory

Petitioners denounced the continuing Indonesian military activities in East Timor and rejected claims by the Indonesian authorities that resistance has ceased. In addition, a number of experts in the field of human rights expressed their concern at reports of gross human rights violations in

the territory, such as imprisonment without charge, murder of civilians, systematic torture and unfair trials.

Indonesia has imposed a birth control program on the East Timorese people in a deliberate effort to reduce the East Timorese to a minority in their own land. It was further submitted that this strategy is supplemented by a transmigration scheme intended to bring to East Timor peasants and civil servants from Indonesia. It was pointed out that both the birth control and the transmigration programs are opposed by the Catholic Church of East Timor.

Petitioners expressed their concern that tens of thousands of East Timorese have been forced over the years to abandon their ancestral lands and move into so-called resettlement camps, where their activities are completely controlled by Indonesian personnel. No East Timorese is free to travel within the country or to leave the territory.

Some petitioners who had visited East Timor during the Portuguese colonial period refuted claims that the East Timorese are better off today than under the Portuguese.

It was also claimed that so-called Indonesian "development" does not benefit the East Timorese people but rather is aimed at perpetuating and consolidating Indonesia's military presence and is destructive of indigenous culture and life.

5. International access

A number of petitioners such as the Catholic Institute for International Relations (CIIR), ASIA WATCH, Amnesty International (AI), the Australian Council for Overseas Aid (ACFOA), the British Parliamentary Human Rights Group, deplored the fact that their repeated requests to visit the territory had been rejected by the Indonesian authorities. The claims by the Indonesian authorities that a number of international agencies, including UN Specialized Agencies, are present in East Timor, were challenged. It was pointed out that UNICEF has no resident personnel in East Timor and that its entire program on the ground in East Timor is run by the Indonesian Red Cross (PMI), an organization controlled by the Indonesian military. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has only one nurse in East Timor who is in fact based off-shore on Atauro island.

Speakers urged the UN to press for totally open access to East Timor for NGOs.

6. Visits to East Timor

Visits to the territory by foreign diplomats, politicians, and journalists, have been limited to one to three days, to only a few places, and are subjected to strict Indonesian control, speakers said. There have been no instances of a truly independent fact-finding mission visiting the territory independent of Indonesian control. Western diplomatic missions to East Timor had been mainly to justify established government policies instead of ascertaining the truth, petitioners argued. There were instances in which the Indonesian authorities made last minute cancellations of visits to areas of critical need or to areas of strong resistance. The severe restrictions imposed by the Indonesian authorities have resulted in distorted and deficient reporting on conditions in the territory by the few who have visited.

7. International concern

Petitioners pointed out that over the past twelve months there have been a number of public international expression of concern about the situation in East Timor. 133 US Congressmen and 23 US Senators addressed letters to the President of US and Secretary of State Shultz, respectively, urging that the East Timor problem be raised with Indonesian leaders during the ASEAN Summit in Bali in April 1986. In July the European Parliament adopted a strongly-worded resolution by overwhelming majority in favour of self-determination for East Timor. More than 70 members of the Japanese Parliament addressed a letter to the UN Secretary-General urging that the East Timorese people be consulted on their future. Recently the Portuguese Parliament unanimously adopted a resolution strongly supporting the right of the East Timorese people to self-determination and independence. Churches throughout the world, in Asia, Oceania, Europe and North America, have also expressed strong concern about the continuing suffering of the people of East Timor and the need for a just solution.

SPECIAL COMMITTEE OF 24 - 1986

15 August 1986
1310th meeting
3.00 p.m.

QUESTION OF EAST TIMOR

(AM#)

(16) 1. Sr. BENEDICT R. ANDERSON - SOUTHEAST ASIA PROGRAM, CORNELL UNIVERSITY

(1) 2. SR. SOEI LIONG LIEM - BRITISH CAMPAIGN FOR THE DEFENCE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN INDONESIA

(2) 3. SRA. JULIA MORRIGAN - INDONESIA EAST TIMOR PROGRAM

(3) 4. SRTA. SIDNEY JONES - AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

(5) 5. SR. KLEMENS LUDWIG - SOCIETY FOR THREATENED PEOPLES

(6) 6. SR. JAN MUTER - KOMITEE INDONESIE

(7) 7. SR. ROBERT ARCHER - CATHOLIC INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

(8) 8. LORD AVEBURY - PARLIAMENTARY HUMAN RIGHTS GROUP

(9) 9. SR. MICHEL ROBERT - ASSOCIATION DE SOLIDARITE AVEC TIMOR ORIENTAL

(10) 10. SR. MASAKI YOKOYAMA - CHRISTIAN CONFERENCE OF ASIA

(11) 11. SR. MATTHEW FRANCIS - HOBART EAST TIMOR COMMITTEE

(12) 12. SRTA. ELIZABETH TRAUBE - WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

(13) 13. SR. WILLIAM F. FELICE - INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR THE RIGHTS AND LIBERATION OF PEOPLES

(14) 14. EL REV. FRANCISCO FERNANDES - DE LA COMUNIDAD DE REFUGIADOS DEL TIMOR ORIENTAL RESIDENTES EN AUSTRALIA

(15) 15. SR. PAT WALSH - AUSTRALIA COUNCIL FOR OVERSEAS AID

(18) 16. SR. JOSE RAMOS HORTA

(19) 17. SRTA. ELAINE BRIERE - CANADA ASIA WORKING GROUP

(20) 18. SRA. LUISA TEOTONIO PEREIRA- COMISSAO PARA OS DIREITOS DO POVO MAUBERE

(21) 19. EL MONSEÑOR MARTINHO DA COSTA LOPES

(4) 20. SR. FLOYD ABRAMS - ASIA WATCH

21. SR. EDA - JAPANESE DIET